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Type in the U. S. National Herbarium, no. 579209, collected near Cana, Panama, April 17 to June 8, 1908, by R. S. Williams, no. 917.

D. Williamsii is related to *D. orthoclada* (Christ) Underw. of the interior mountain region of Costa Rica, a species which differs widely in its glabrous condition throughout, its shorter and broader branches, its somewhat flexuous rachises, its few and conspicuously surcurrent segments, its much heavier costae, and its widely branched veins.

The peculiar morphology of the family Gleicheniaceae, represented in America by the genus *Dicranopteris*, is discussed at some length in a paper by Dr. Underwood,* which is doubtless available to many members of the American Fern Society. Most of the species grow on barren, open or partially shaded slopes, often in very great profusion and forming dense, tangled thickets of wide extent. The commonest North American member of the genus is *Dicranopteris bifida*.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

A plea for fern protection

ORRA PARKER PHELPS

In the year 1869, the Connecticut legislature passed an act prohibiting the gathering of the climbing fern, *Lygodium palmatum*. Prior to that time, this beautiful fern had been extensively collected and sold for decorative purposes. Since the passing of the act, I am told by those who have lived in the climbing fern regions, it has recovered from its threatened extinction and again makes beautiful its chosen swamps and fields.

At the present time the wooded hills are each summer infested by swarms of men and boys who come from the

* Bull. Torrey Club 34: 243-262. 1907.

large cities and ship bale after bale of our hardy ferns to the florists. The land owners do not seem to care to put a stop to this thieving, though if so much as a hen were taken from the farm yard, there would doubtless be a flourish of shotguns.

It has been argued that as the ferns are perennials the frond harvest does no harm. But many of the ferns gathered are shallow-rooted; the men work very hurriedly, for haste pays; and their path through the woods is marked by a windrow of broken rootstocks. How long does it take a fern to come from the spore to maturity? Surely no less than six years, probably much longer. But suppose the fronds were carefully collected, what of the scattering of spores for the production of new ferns?

When the harvest first began to be yearly gathered, the work was done in the fall after the spores were ripe and scattered. Every year it has begun a little earlier, till the past June I saw six bales of ferns, each containing from 5,000 to 6,000 fronds, waiting for shipment at a little country station. The ferns were *Aspidium marginale*, *A. spinulosum* and varieties, and *Polystichum acrostichoides*. On none of the fronds did the spores seem to be ripe and some fronds were still so young that the tips were not fully developed.

Is not this traffic a menace to our fern flora? Is it not within the province of the American Fern Society to take some steps toward securing for future generations one of the chief beauties of our woods?

SALSBURY, CONN.